

Exceptional Children and Youth:

SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENTS

IN PUBLIC DAY SCHOOLS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

Office of Education

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EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH are those who have unusual educational needs because of blindness, partial loss of vision, deafness, impaired hearing, speech handicaps, crippling conditions, special health problems, mental retardation, serious social or emotional problems, or unusual gifts or talents

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Exceptional Children and Youth:

A Chart Book of Special Education
Enrollments in Public Day Schools
of the United States

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

ABRAHAM A. RIBICOFF
Secretary

Office of Education
STERLING M. McMURRIN
Commissioner

By ROMAINÉ P. MACKIE,
Chief, Exceptional Children and Youth
and PATRICIA PEACE ROBBINS,
*Research Assistant, Exceptional
Children and Youth*

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Acknowledgments

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The 4,990 local public school systems which completed and returned to the Office of Education detailed inquiry forms.

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Foreword

This advance report of the nationwide status of special education programs for exceptional children in local public school systems is based on data collected for the U.S. Office of Education's 1956-58 *Biennial Survey of Education in the United States*. Preliminary figures are given in this report in line with the general policy of the Office to make the results of the biennial surveys available as promptly as possible. A more detailed report, together with an analysis of the findings, will be published later as part of the 1956-58 *Survey*.

The tables and graphs contained within these few pages depict the tangible results of the ever-mounting determination of the American people to provide special education programs for children with exceptional educational needs.

J. DAN HULL, *Director,
Instruction, Organization,
and Services Branch*

E. GLENN FEATHERSTON,
*Assistant Commissioner and
Director, Division of State
and Local School Systems*



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YESTERDAY . . . AND TODAY

Opportunity for exceptional children to obtain the specialized educational provisions they require has been steadily improving since the early part of this century. The U.S. Office of Education has been charting this progress through its biennial surveys of education and has published statistical reports on this segment of American education since 1870.

Today, hundreds of thousands of the Nation's handicapped and gifted children are enrolled in special education programs provided by local public school systems. Other thousands are being educated in public or private residential institutions equipped to give 24-hour care. Still others are in private or parochial day schools.

This report of findings from the 1958 survey of special education focuses on nationwide enrollment statistics of exceptional children

and youth in local public school programs. Included are graphic presentations of the proportion currently enrolled in nursery-kindergarten, elementary, or secondary grades, and of the proportion enrolled in various types of programs, such as full-time special classes or hospital instruction.

Also included in these pages are charts depicting the growth that has taken place over the years, particularly during the decade 1948-58. Although changes in the size of school systems and the types of special education programs covered by each of the biennial surveys are such that some of the data are not strictly comparable, nevertheless the general picture is clearly one of expanding specialized instructional opportunities for the Nation's handicapped and gifted children.

COVERAGE OF THE SURVEY

All 48 of the United States in 1958 were included in this survey of special education.

Questionnaires were sent to public school systems in urban places with populations of 2,500 or more (as listed in the U.S. Office of Education's 1956-57 directory of counties and cities) and to all other local public school systems which the State departments of education reported as having a special instructional program for at least one type of exceptional child. Of the 5,041 questionnaires mailed, 97 percent were completed and returned.

For the first time, the scope of the study extended to nursery and kindergarten programs, as well as to elementary and secondary. It covered all types of programs, including day class, itinerant, home, and hospital instruction.

Residential schools were also included, but the data were not yet processed when the present publication was being prepared. These data will be a part of a more detailed report to be issued later.

All data were collected as of February 15, 1958.

The following terms and instructions appeared in the questionnaire to guide the reporting of enrollments:

Blind. (*Use the State's legal definition.*)

Partially Seeing

Deaf

Hard of Hearing

Speech Impaired. (*Include only those receiving special corrective work not those in general speech improvement classes.*)

Crippled. (*Include cerebral palsied.*)

Special Health Problems. (*Tuberculosis, epilepsy, cardiac, and other below-par conditions.*)

Socially and Emotionally Maladjusted. (*Include delinquent.*)

Mentally Retarded. (*Upper range, approximately 50-75 I.Q.; middle range, approximately 25-50 I.Q. Do not include children in slow sections of regular grades.*)

Mentally Gifted. (*Include only those in special schools or classes—not those in high sections of regular grades.*)

ENROLLMENT OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

In February 1958, a record 882,066 exceptional children and youth were reported to be enrolled in special education programs of the Nation's local public school systems. This is an unduplicated count of pupils, each child having been recorded only in his major area of exceptionality.

About one-half of these children were receiving special instructional services primarily because of speech impairments, and about one-fourth primarily because of mental retardation. The remaining one-fourth had exceptional education needs because of blindness, partial loss of vision, deafness, impaired hearing, crippling conditions, special health problems, serious social or emotional maladjustment, or giftedness.

When public and private residential school enrollments (based on preliminary tabulations) and estimates of private day school enrollments are added, the total number of handicapped and gifted pupils receiving special educational provisions may well reach a million and a quarter. Even so this is only about one-fourth of the number estimated to need special education.

Special Education Enrollments in Local Public School Systems

<i>Area of Exceptionality</i>	<i>Number of Pupils</i>
Total.....	882,066
Blind.....	2,844
Partially Seeing.....	8,598
Deaf.....	6,424
Hard of Hearing.....	13,113
Speech Impaired.....	486,944
Crippled.....	29,311
Special Health Problems.....	23,077
Socially and Emotionally Maladjusted.....	28,260
Mentally Retarded (upper range).....	201,406
Mentally Retarded (middle range).....	16,779
Gifted.....	52,269
Other ¹	13,041

¹ Includes the following pupils not reported in separate categories of exceptionality: blind and partially seeing, 119; deaf and hard of hearing, 1,993; speech impaired and hard of hearing, 4,493; crippled and special health problems, 4,686; special health problems and socially maladjusted, 22; upper and middle range mentally retarded, 1,403; and multihandicapped, 325.

ENROLLMENTS 1948-58

The decade 1948-58 witnessed an unprecedented rise of 132 percent in special education enrollments in the public day schools across the Nation.¹ This is more than three times the rate at which total public elementary and secondary enrollment increased during the same 10-year period.

Since there is no evidence of a marked change in the prevalence of most handicapping conditions among school age children and youth, it is evident that some very real gains have been made. But sharp differences occurred in the rate of growth from one area of exceptionality to another. The most striking expansion took place in the area of the blind, where five times as many were in special public day school programs in 1958 as in 1948.

The number of mentally retarded and gifted children receiving either full- or part-time specialized instruction more than doubled, as did the number of children receiving speech correction.

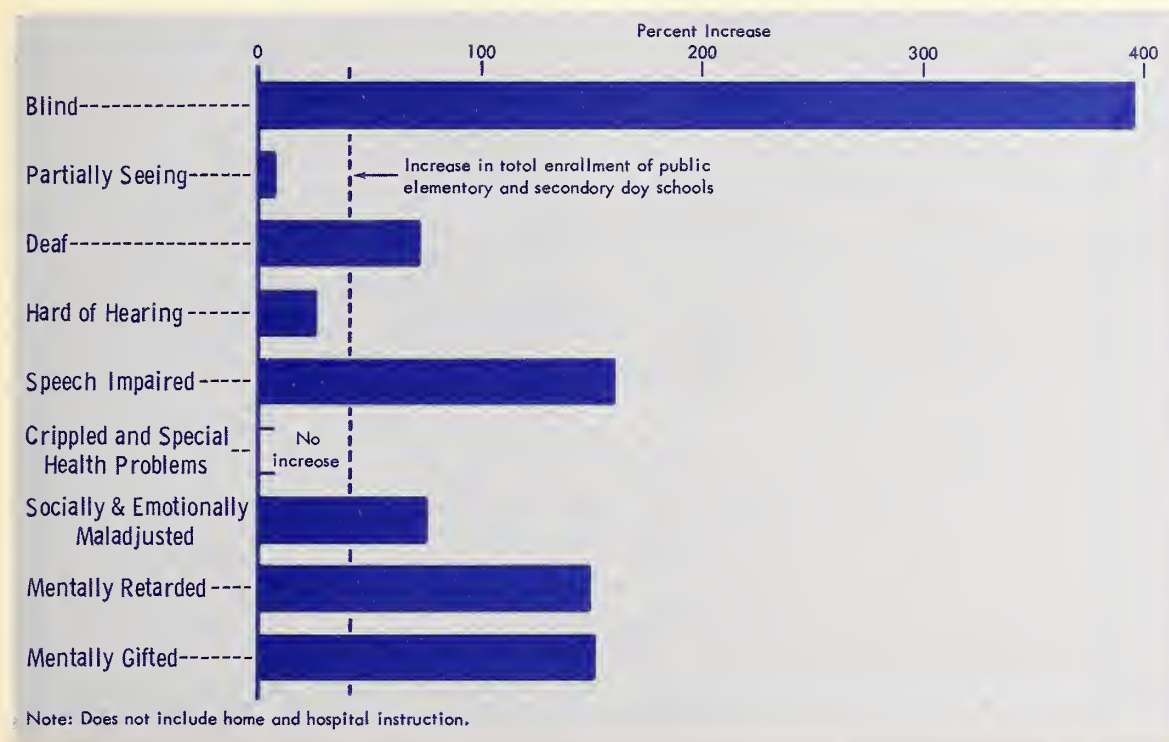
¹ This rise in enrollment does not include children in home and hospital instruction since comparable data are not available for 1948 and 1958.

Two programs—one for partially seeing children, the other for hard of hearing children—have not been developing fast enough to keep pace with the increase in total public school enrollment. This may suggest a critical need for evaluation of educational programs and opportunities for children who are not blind or deaf, but who have sufficient loss of vision or hearing to interfere with school progress.

Virtually no change has taken place in the total enrollment of children with crippling conditions and special health problems.² This is a finding difficult to evaluate without a more definitive study of the kinds of physical handicaps included among the children reported. It does raise the question of whether the prevalence of any of these conditions is decreasing, whether changing educational methods and philosophies have resulted in larger numbers of such children in regular school programs, or whether the schools are not, as the finding suggests, providing sufficient special education opportunity.

² Comparison of each area separately is not possible because of the large proportion of pupils reported in this combined category in the 1958 survey.

Increase in Enrollments: 1948-58



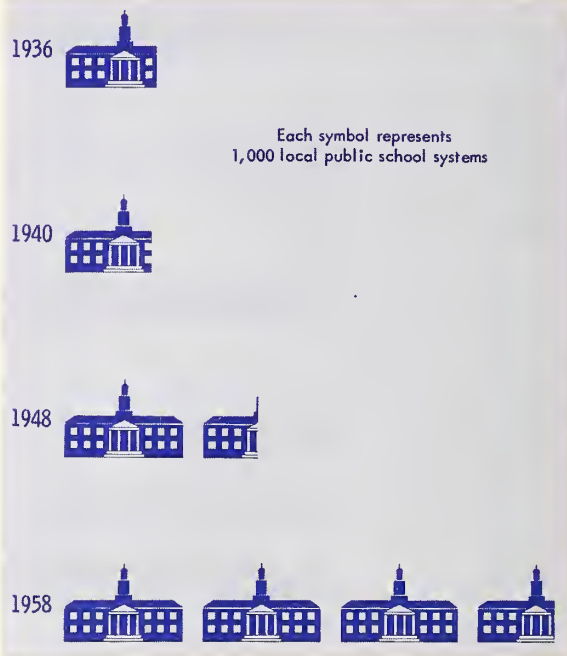
LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

A quarter of a century ago, about 750 local public school systems reported enrollments of exceptional children in special education programs. Ten years ago that number had doubled, and by 1958 had reached approximately 3,700.

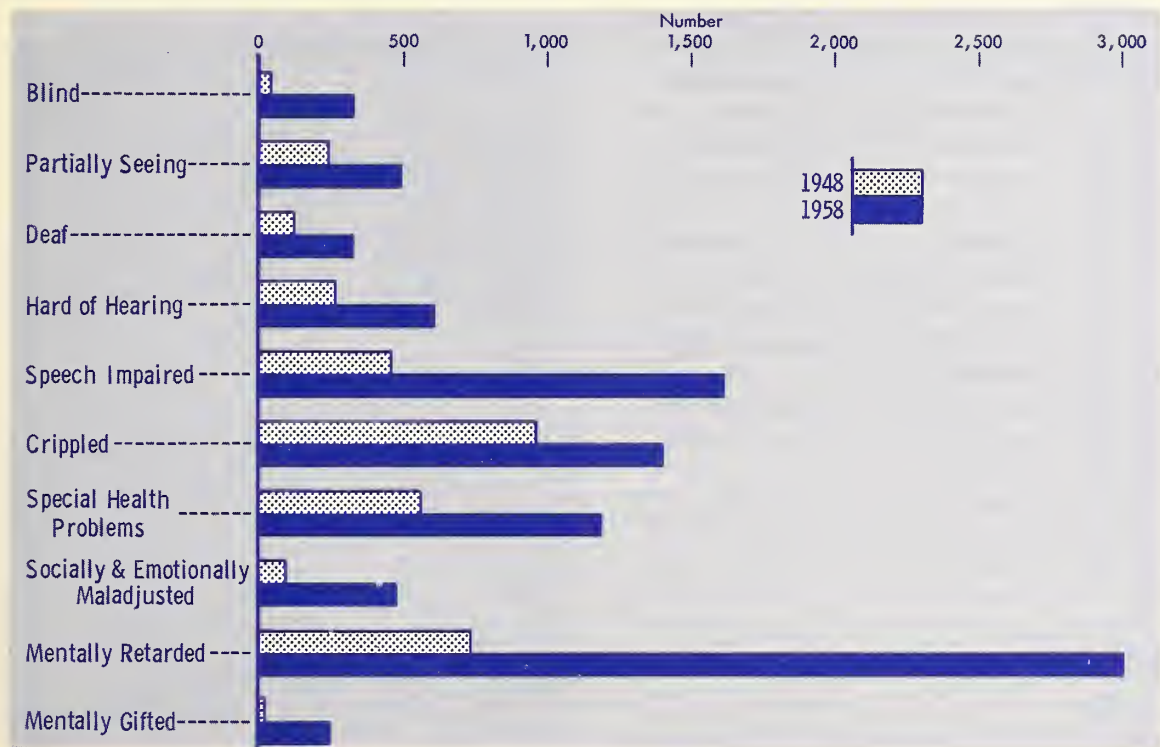
This rapid expansion is one measure of the Nation's progress toward the goal of special education opportunity for all handicapped or gifted children who need and can benefit from it. Although substantial growth has taken place in all areas, far more school systems reported special programs for mentally retarded than for any other type of exceptional children.

Another measure of progress is that a variety of multidistrict special education programs, sometimes encompassing one or more counties, have been developed to meet the educational needs of handicapped and gifted children in the less populated sections of the country. A large number of reports received in the 1958 survey were from small school systems, many of which identified enrollments of exceptional children from as many as 10 or 20 neighboring towns and villages.

Places Reporting Programs: 1936-58



Number of Places Reporting Programs in Each Area of Exceptionality



ENROLLMENT BY GRADE LEVELS

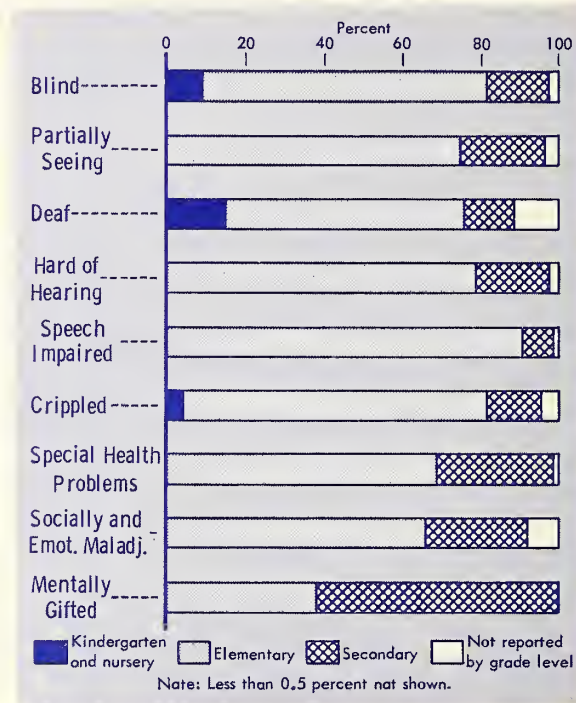
By far the largest number of children enrolled in special education programs¹ of local public school systems in February 1958 were in elementary grades (83 percent). Most of the others were in secondary grades (14 percent). A small fraction were either in special nursery or kindergarten programs, or were not reported by grade levels.

Somewhat differing patterns emerge when each area of exceptionality is viewed separately. For example, as the graph at the right shows, only one-third of the gifted children in special education were elementary students. The current emphasis on early identification and programming for the gifted youngster may, however, increase this percentage in the future.

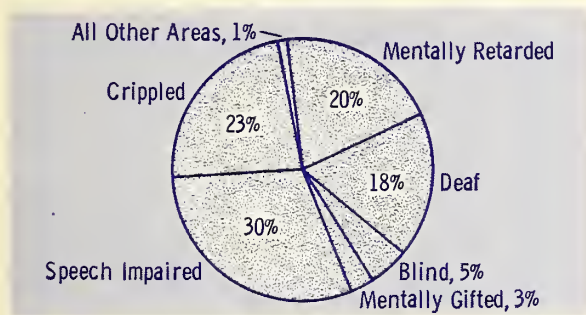
Two significant facts are revealed by a closer study of the findings. One is the extent of provision for the exceptional child of nursery and kindergarten age; the other is the continuing expansion of programs for the exceptional child of secondary school age.

¹ Exclusive of the mentally retarded who were not reported by elementary or secondary grade levels.

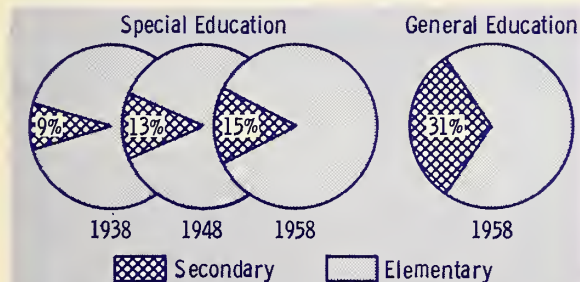
Proportion of Enrollments at Each Level of Instruction



Distribution of Nursery and Kindergarten Pupils



Ratio of Secondary to Elementary Pupils



Note: Does not include mentally retarded.

Every area of exceptionality was represented among the approximately 5,000 children in nursery and kindergarten programs of special education. Those with speech impairments made up 30 percent of this number, while deaf, crippled, and mentally retarded children each made up about 20 percent. The chart at the far left suggests that pre-elementary special education plays a larger role in some areas than others. These data—an innovation of the 1958 survey—should form a valuable base-line from which developments can be measured in future years.

At the same time that special educators were reaching out to meet the needs of these very young children, they were also extending special instructional opportunities to more and more adolescent youth. Although it is not known what proportion of older exceptional children need special education, comparison of the ratio of secondary to elementary enrollments in special and general education suggests that the full potential of the secondary special education program has probably not yet been reached.

TYPES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Over the years, several types of special education programs have been provided by local public school systems: instruction full-time in a special school or class, instruction part-time in a specialized program and part-time in a regular class, instruction in a child's own home, and instruction in a hospital, convalescent home, or residential facility. The chart on the opposite page depicts the proportion of enrollments in each of these programs as reported in its 1958 survey of special education.

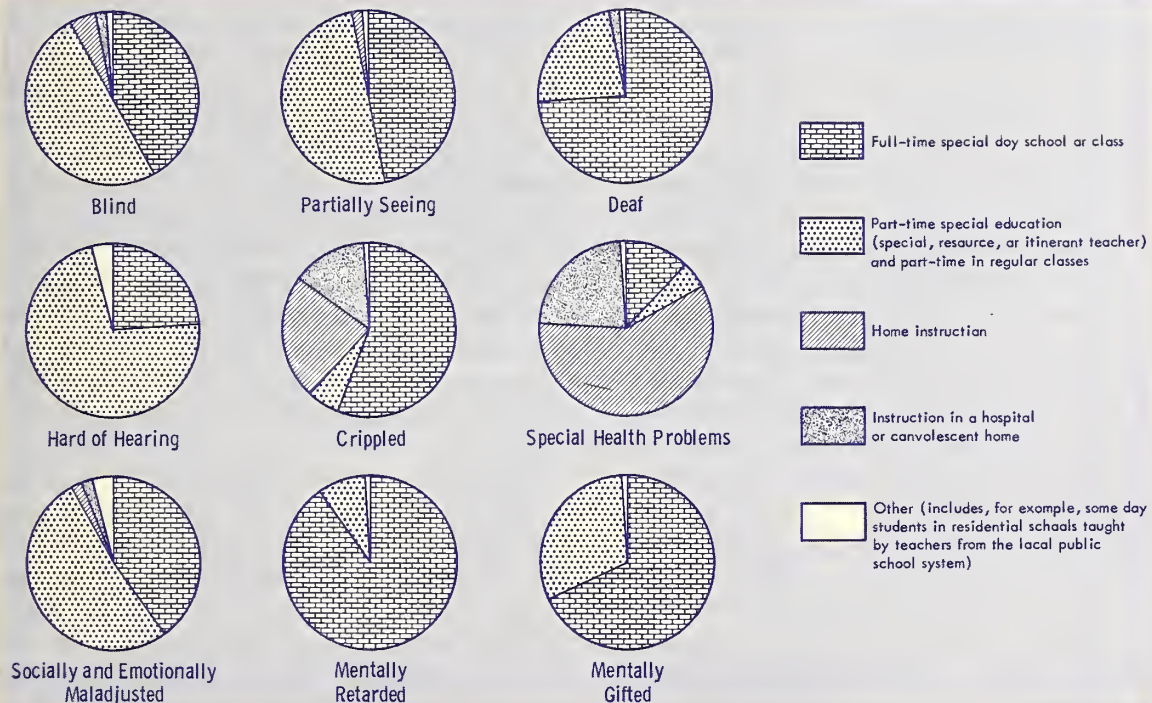
Across the Nation, the full-time self-contained special class plays a major role in the education of most types of exceptional children. This is particularly true in the areas of the deaf, mentally retarded, and gifted.

Widespread use is also being made of part-time special instruction combined with part-time instruction in a regular class. This type of program is predominant in the areas of speech (not shown on the chart) and of hearing, but also prevails to a considerable extent in providing special education for children who are blind, partially seeing, maladjusted, or gifted.

School is brought to home or hospital for large numbers of children and youth confined because of crippling conditions or special health problems. In addition, home and hospital instruction make up a small part of the Nation's total special education program for the visually handicapped, maladjusted, or disturbed.

These statistics give only a general outline of the types of special education programs in the Nation's schools. Many educators would like to see more of the detail filled in. Some would like to know, for example, what criteria are used for placement of children in the various types of programs. Others are interested in the nature and scope of the itinerant teacher program, which in this survey was included under the broad category of part-time special instruction. Still others would like to know more about the function of home instruction programs for youngsters who are socially maladjusted or emotionally disturbed. It is hoped, therefore, that a number of program studies will be made of these and other questions which may be raised by the findings from this nationwide survey.

Proportion of Enrollments in Each Type of Program



TODAY . . . AND TOMORROW

Today, as never before, exceptional children and youth have opportunity to participate in specialized instructional programs suited to their needs and capabilities. Nevertheless, it appears that for every *one* enrolled in a special education program, *three* others are not.

Any attempt to ascertain the Nation's progress toward the goal of special education for every child who requires it is limited by a lack of current, scientifically based prevalence figures. Still, by using estimates generally accepted as conservative in each area of exceptionality, it is possible to determine roughly the extent to which needs are being met. Apparently a very high proportion of blind and deaf children are receiving specialized instruction either in day or residential schools, in contrast to a fairly low proportion of those with partial loss of vision or hearing. The two largest programs—one for children with speech impairments, the other for those with mental retardation—are probably reaching only about one out of every four who could benefit. Special education for the socially maladjusted or emotionally disturbed,

with an equally large potential enrollment, falls far short of this ratio.

It is difficult to make a realistic estimate of the number of children with crippling conditions or special health problems who require special education because of the wide variety of medical problems and physical disabilities included in these two categories. It is even more difficult to measure progress in meeting the educational needs of gifted children and youth, since many different types of special provisions are made for them within general as well as special education. It is believed, however, that in each of these areas the number in need of some kind of special school program far exceeds the number enrolled.

In spite of rapid enrollment gains in the past 10 years, it is clear that much still remains to be done. Closing the gap between need and service will be accomplished only through the cooperative efforts of many people in overcoming some major obstacles. One of these is the current shortage of special teachers and the fact that competition for manpower in all of

the professions is expected to continue throughout the 60's. Another is a predicted increase of about 20 percent in the school-age population as a whole during the next decade—resulting in even larger numbers of exceptional children needing special education.

Further, the Nation is only at the threshold of an era when accumulated experience coupled with new knowledge from research—medical, educational, social—will have a profound effect on special education. Some of these research findings will form a basis for school program im-

provement and should be promptly and widely circulated. Qualitative as well as quantitative advances must be made if exceptional children and youth are to receive the education they require.

It is gratifying to look back at the gains already made. But no one—neither the public nor the schools—will be satisfied unless adequate educational opportunity is extended to every child severely handicapped by physical, mental, social, or emotional problems and to every child endowed with extraordinary gifts or talents.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Basic data for this publication were collected as part of the U.S. Office of Education Biennial Survey of Education in the United States, 1956-58. The following additional sources were used:

Schloss, Samuel, and Carol Joy Hobson. *Fall 1958 Statistics on Enrollment, Teachers and Schoolhousing* (Circular No. 551). U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959, 18 p.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports* (Series P-25, No. 187). Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958, 25 p.

U.S. Department of Labor, *Manpower, Challenge of the 1960's*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960. 23 p.

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